

Honorable Judge Ellis
United States District Court Judge
Eastern District of Virginia
Alexandria VA 22314

November 14, 2019

Dear Honorable Judge Ellis:

I am writing this letter of reference for my husband, Haroon Ullah, as he is about to stand before you for sentencing for crimes he has plead guilty to. I hope I can give you a comprehensive picture of Haroon as a person.

I have known Haroon for almost two decades. We met in Boston while we I was completing my undergraduate studies at Wellesley College and he was beginning his graduate studies at the Kennedy School of Government. I knew him as the hard-working country boy from eastern Washington state who had recently travelled the world on a Watson scholarship studying soccer as a means to unify communities and countries, ambitiously looking forward to a career in public service. We developed a reciprocal admiration for each other and friendship through mutual friends who recognized our similarities; I was also an avid soccer player who was interested in public health and community service. However, as a similarly ambitious person, I was singularly focused on going to medical school, and our paths subsequently diverged for the first time of many.

Over the years, Haroon and I would cross paths after large gaps, during which each of us pursued our dreams. Our friends would often say that we were like ships passing in the night. Haroon received a Fulbright grant to study in the Middle East and South Asia and obtained his PhD in public policy; I led disaster relief teams in Haiti and taught medical sciences to gifted Israeli and Palestinian children by the Dead Sea after obtaining my MD. Haroon realized his dream to work at the State Department and was a trusted bipartisan senior advisor under three Secretaries of State. I ended up in DC as the Director of an Allergy clinic in a multi-specialty practice, and shifted to a practice in rural Maryland. After 15 years from the time we first met, we finally reconnected in DC and got married. Many friends called it a miracle, but many more say it was always meant to be.

I married Haroon because, simply put, he is one of the most talented and giving individuals I have ever met in my entire life. Early on, he was known among our friends to be incredibly diplomatic and would often resolve disagreements between friends and even in organizations. He has a unique ability to view situations from each party's perspective and this makes him incredible at conflict resolution. I have rarely seen him get directly upset at anyone, and he is notably humble; thus, he is an excellent team leader and team player. I am sure this is what made him stand out so much in his career, and why he was climbing up the government ladder so quickly at such a young age, first at the State Department, and then at USAGM.

In my own family, my siblings and even my parents have repeatedly relied on Haroon to help sort through any difficulties each of them have had. It is because of this that my parents have always thought of Haroon as another son. After my brother had to quit his job to help take care of my mother, Haroon helped him in his job search. He has been instrumental in aiding my sister navigate mediation after she suffered from domestic abuse. His giving nature knows no bounds. He spends his free time mentoring youth and helping friends and colleagues with such things as PhD dissertations and book editing, non-

profit organizational strategic advice, and educational and career advice. My father often would joke that while the rest of us have 24-hour days, Haroon appeared to have 30.

I left out a lot of details of our relationship story, but suffice it to say that while we experienced all the elements of love that couples dream of, it was not without quite a bit of devastation, struggle, and trials that most couples could break from. I only tell you this so that you understand that I have seen Haroon at his best and also during his darkest moments. And while Haroon has shined brightly at his best for most of his life, this past year and half most certainly counts as one of, if not, the darkest.

We started 2018 with a miscarriage, which was tremendously difficult on both of us. Haroon and I both went back to work the same day after we were informed, as we both felt that we were needed; his team relied on him heavily for direction, and my patients were overscheduled. We grieved in the evenings and weekends and with heavy support from my parents. Only a few months later, my mother suddenly fell into a devastating coma. For me, this has been the single most devastating and formative event in my life. For Haroon, he has been a pillar of support from day one. My mother was like his own mother, and anyone could see that. He left work the moment it happened and drove me straight to New York without stopping, and sobbed and prayed with me and our family at her bedside. In the months and now over a year since this happened, he has helped my family in immeasurable ways. From the practical aspects, like getting groceries for the entire family, finding a place we could rent close to the hospital, coordinating visits from friends and family, and driving us to NY and then NJ almost every weekend, to the emotional aspects such as comforting me when I would wake up crying, collecting donations for a charity cause in my mother's honor, or encouraging me to get a massage when I couldn't think of taking care of myself – he never missed a beat. He was always taking calls for work and on his computer sending memos, even from the hospital lounges, but never complained. In between his conference calls, for example, he would still lend a listening ear to my father or give him an extra hug for comfort that dad so desperately needed. I could not have asked for a better partner during this unimaginable crisis. It took a huge toll on Haroon. Even though in my own grief, I could not pay much attention to him, I knew that driving almost every weekend was physically challenging, especially since he suffered from a painful chronic knee condition. I knew that on top of his busy work schedule juggling so many hats, adding additional stresses by helping my entire family was not easy. But always the giving one, Haroon is not one to say no when people need him.

I should add that the same day that I found out about my mother's coma, I also found out I was pregnant again. What should have been a joyous revelation was now an incredibly bittersweet one and I largely ignored my pregnancy except when Haroon reminded me and cared for me. This pregnancy also proved to be quite difficult, with physical complications, but Haroon held my hand through it, and the birth of our daughter Hira was a memorable one. I still remember that Haroon called my mother's phone the very moment I delivered, so that my father could put it by her ear so that she could hear Hira's first cries. We have been told that our mom can hear, so having her be present somehow in that moment meant everything to me.

It was towards the end of my pregnancy that I first learned of Haroon's offenses. There could be no one more disappointed in him than me. I was raised in a family where my father taught us that one shouldn't even taking an extra roll of toilet paper from a hotel for a day trip; the reason being that ethically, one only pays for the "standard" use of items. I grew up to be meticulous in my accounting and generous in my charity. When my friends heard about Haroon's plea, they were shocked and some even angry, as they knew me to be conscientious. However, Haroon has a history of being a diligent and conscientious person as well. While I was never aware of the violations he made at work, I have always known him to be

thoughtful when spending governmental resources even when it was not convenient for him. He was always trying to find ways to make systems more efficient and maximize tight budgets, which is one reason why he would take on additional responsibility at work himself. So you can imagine my horror when we went through each violation in detail, only to find out that all of these crimes occurred in the time since our miscarriage. We both struggle to understand what was going on in Haroon's mind to do these things. Why, in most instances, would he submit a false receipt for something that he could submit a legitimate receipt. With our insurance, had he just made the time to go through our admittedly burdensome and voluminous records for the repairs, we would have gotten the exact same money to which we were entitled. While it was a shortcut and a time saver, we did not end up with a single extra dollar. With his work expenses, he often submitted false receipts that were for less than the actual receipts entitled him to. For Haroon's upgrades of travel, we have lost tens of thousands of dollars repaid to the government (borrowed from my family), Haroon has lost his job, damaged if not destroyed his reputation and shattered so much of the life we have worked so hard to build. I have sat with Haroon for hours discussing the horrific impact on his and our life, the risks he has taken and the difficulty we will all face. I have held him as he has sobbed and this has tested us as a couple and been horrific on us as a family. The future will certainly never be what it could have been. I have watched how Haroon has suffered these last few months, but never once have I heard him blame anyone but himself. He is a truly good man, a wonderful husband, son and brother. Even more than that, I have seen him as a father and despite this trying time and his actions and what they have wrought on us, I could not imagine a better father to our daughter and I know I would never find a better man.

During the investigation, we also found out that Haroon lost his job. I have kept my job, though I have continued to be part-time due to continued visits with my mother. Having a parent in long-term care presents its own challenges, and we have long-realized that there is no replacement for physical presence to getting good care. Elder abuse is unfortunately rampant in nursing facilities, and we have witnessed unspeakable neglect when we are not there, particularly since my mother cannot speak for herself. As a physician, it has been important to me to communicate directly with those caring for my mother while she is in and out of various facilities, even though her prognosis has become grim with each passing day. Financially, our healthcare system for long-term nursing care is far from perfect, and we have had to pay enormous out of pocket costs for my mother for almost this entire year once Medicare stopped paying. In this vain, Haroon continues to be a pillar for me by driving us all up to NJ regularly, and has even helped set up our meetings with elder care lawyers.

As we have been unable to afford childcare, Haroon has been the primary caretaker for our daughter Hira, and he has done a fantastic job. He is there for her while I am at work and while I am at the hospital in NJ. It is wonderful to see him thrive as a stay-at-home parent as his sense of protection over her is beautiful. At the same time, it is difficult to watch someone whose career potential was so limitless with so much promise to serve his country spend his time not doing so. Time after time, job prospects have been lost due to his felony, and at times we lost hope. Fortunately, however, he has been able to secure a position as a consultant, and he is able to contribute to our family financially while also doing significant good through his training programs across the country.

He has also lost his reputation in our community. Once a highly sought after mentor and leader, he has lost his position from voluntary boards and no longer speaks on issues of national security to the broader community or finding fulfilling careers in public service to the Muslim community. Moreover though, he has a deep sense of shame for what he has done and does not even feel he is a good role model to speak on these issues. However, I do feel that his sense of duty to repair damages that he has caused is very awe-inspiring. He has cooperated in every way, blames no one for his own wrongs, and has done

significant self-reflection throughout this process. In this way, I have been so proud of the way he has taken himself to account. There has been no one harder on Haroon than Haroon himself. For this reason, I know that no further sentence can do more to deter Haroon from committing any semblance of the same offenses than what harm he has already faced, in every single aspect of his life – emotional, financial, and physical. This year and a half has been the most difficult one of our life. He has been broken a thousand times. These consequences he has faced will haunt him forever.

Lastly, as Haroon's wife and mother of his infant child, I urge you to take into consideration that our small family will suffer even more if Haroon is unavailable to us – also emotionally, financially and physically. I have no help at home, I have no funds to secure help at home as I have depleted my savings over my mother's care, and I cannot emphasize enough the difficulties of the task of, for example, putting a cranky toddler to sleep when one is already sleep-deprived (this has sometimes taken over two hours in the past few weeks).

Your honor, I humbly request that you take into account what I have written in determining a fair sentence for Haroon. Haroon is a loving and dedicated husband, father, son, and son-in-law and brother-in-law. He has been an unfaltering patriot who risked his life in a danger zone (Pakistan), and he is a loyal friend and mentor to those who know him.


He has certainly done wrong and for that he, and all of us, have been punished severely with a felony conviction. He has agreed, against the advice of his lawyers and his family, to a period of incarceration as punishment for his conduct. Not because he needs to be deterred or because he has not suffered enough, but because he is willing to accept this additional humiliation as proof of his genuine remorse.

I beg that Court to exercise its mercy and permit Haroon to serve any sentence that is imposed in a way that permits him to care for our daughter when I am working and still have an opportunity to maintain employment. I realize that it is extraordinary to request weekends in jail and that the Government has already demonstrated just how important and selfless Haroon's contributions have been, by their consideration of deferred prosecution and now, for their recommendation for sentence below the guidelines.

What the government has seen is Haroon's heartfelt and authentic remorse and acceptance of responsibility and what the government knows is that Haroon's positive contributions far outweigh his actions during a short window in time. Even more importantly, the government fully grasps the man that Haroon is and that there is no good that comes from leaving me alone with a baby in our current situation. That a period of incarceration that will cost Haroon the only job he has been able to find, is counter to the interests of justice.

I will be in attendance at Haroon's sentencing and will stand by him always. I am happy to answer any questions your honor may have and thank you from the bottom of my heart for your kindness in reading this request.

Sincerely,



Naba A. Sharif